

LEQUE ISLAND – STAKEHOLDER ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING #1
Wednesday, January 8, 2014
6:30-8:30 pm
Stanwood Public Library

Meeting Objectives:

Get to know each other and build relationships; participants understand and support the role/function of committee; participants share what they value most about Leque Island and visions for its future; WDFW/DU staff have an opportunity to provide background and context about the overall project, including process, constraints, etc.

Committee members in attendance:

Alice Turner, Skagit Audubon
Allen Gibbs, Pilchuck Audubon
Ann Bylin, Snohomish County SWM
Bill Blake, Stillaguamish Watershed Council
Bill Vincent
Deborah Knight, City of Stanwood
Kevin Hushagen (Alternate to Deborah Knight), City of Stanwood
Derek Marks, Tulalip Tribes
Echo Walker
Chuck Hazleton (Alternate to Henry Lippek), Stillaguamish Flood Control District
Jason Griffith, Stillaguamish Tribe
Jason Westfall
Jenna Friebe
Jim Locke, Pheasants Forever
John Edison
Karl Ostrom, WA Waterfowl Association
Kathleen Herrmann, Snohomish County MRC
Brent Hackney (Alternate to Kathleen Herrmann), Snohomish County MRC
Kathleen Snyder, Pilchuck Audubon
Keith Williamson
Kenneth Raedeke
Kevin Plambeck, Juniper Beach Water District
Marlin Greene, Friends of Eide Road
Rick Skiba, WA Waterfowl Association
Steve Aslanian, Skagit Audubon

Terrance Dunning, Audubon, Puget Sound Photo Forum
Timothy Manns, Skagit Audubon

Committee members not in attendance:

John Magill
Jon Nelson
Kat Morgan/Jenny Baker, The Nature Conservancy
Tristan Peters-Contesse, Puget Sound Partnership

Others attending:

Loren Brokaw, DFW
Doug Hennick, DFW
Belinda Rotton, DFW
Kye Iris, DFW
Curt Mykut, Ducks Unlimited
Steve Liske, Ducks Unlimited
Hilary Wilkinson, Veda Environmental

Welcome and Introductions

Loren Brokaw from the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm. He introduced himself and invited other members of the core project team to introduce themselves as well, including Doug Hennick (DFW), Belinda Rotton (DFW), Kye Iris (DFW), Curt Mykut (Ducks Unlimited), and Steve Liske (Ducks Unlimited).

He noted DFW's interest in convening the stakeholder advisory committee and thanked everyone for making time to participate. He reviewed how the stakeholder advisory committee was formed, and indicated that everyone who volunteered for the committee was invited to participate. Volunteers were solicited through a survey that was distributed at the October 30th Public Meeting and was available online until November 15th. In addition to distributing the survey at the public meeting, it was also distributed electronically to an email group that includes all Leque Island stakeholders known to WDFW.

He then introduced Hilary Wilkinson who was brought in by the project team to provide neutral, third party facilitation.

Hilary introduced herself and reviewed the meeting objectives, meeting agenda, and meeting "ground rules". All committee members agreed to abide by the meeting norms for this and all future meetings.

Project background and round-table discussion

Loren provided a 25 minute presentation that included an overview of the current status of the project, including

- Why this project now?
- How and why the Stakeholder Advisory Committee was formed
- DFW's intentions regarding the committee's role in the process
- Current thoughts regarding options for addressing dike failures on Leque Island, including constraints and realities DFW is operating under.

A question and answer period followed the presentation. Questions (and responses) include:

1. Please provide more information about the "do nothing" option. Response: If we cannot advance a long-term plan for the area, the temporary dike repairs installed on the east side of the property will eventually need to be removed, even if we "do-nothing". The installation of those repairs was issued under a permit from the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) with a condition that they must be removed within 27 months of installation. That time has since expired, however, WDFW was granted an extension for an additional 3 years (through May 2016) to give time to advance a long-term solution.
2. What is the geographic focus of the project? Response: South of the highway.
3. Where did the \$10-\$15 million estimate for dike reconstruction come from? Response: This estimate was calculated based on cost per linear foot of USACE standard dikes constructed on other projects in the Stillaguamish and Skagit estuaries. The estimate assumes total reconstruction of dikes in their current footprint to determine linear footage.
4. Has anyone prepared a list of which parcels are affected by which actions? Response: We are in the early stages of developing alternatives. Once the alternatives are developed, part of the alternatives analysis process will be to identify which parcels and associated contractual obligations are affected.
5. Might there be other alternatives? Response: Yes. Our hope is to get ideas from this committee – we might not have thought of everything.
6. Who are we advising? Who makes the final decision? Response: The technical staff from DFW here tonight (plus a few others not here) will make a recommendation to regional management staff at DFW; they in turn will send the recommendation (which they might tweak) to the executive management team in Olympia for approval.
7. What is the timeline? Response: DFW hopes to have the preferred alternative selected in early summer. The timing of selecting the preferred alternative is dependent on when the consultant doing the modeling work is able to complete the modeling report, which will advise us on the impacts of each alternative design. So,

this date may change when the scope of work and contract is developed with modeling consultant.

8. What kind of coordination is occurring with WSDOT (especially around the bridge project but also around parking)? Response: Continued coordination with WSDOT is needed. DFW has been in communication with WSDOT as they develop their project to raise and widen the highway, and DFW has advocated retaining access from the highway to the DFW Leque Unit property.

Hilary then facilitated a round-table discussion addressing 5 specific questions. Highlights from the responses to each question include:

1. What is most important to you about Leque Island?

- a. Many participants voiced the need for public access, including handicapped access.
- b. Many participants said providing parking for public access is very important recreation, including
 - i. Hiking
 - ii. Birding
 - iii. Hunting
 - iv. Fishing
 - v. Photography
 - vi. Water access/boating
- c. Habitat for migrating birds
- d. Habitat for other species
- e. Major river estuary restoration opportunity; salmon recovery opportunity
- f. Outdoor education opportunities (decreased funding for outdoor education in local school districts is a real issue). City of Stanwood staff and several other participants said access for groups of schoolchildren is important for educational programs
- g. “Do no harm” – to other infrastructure (built environment) or natural environment (e.g. groundwater recharge to aquifer; existing habitat, etc.)
- h. Coordination with other major projects
- i. Quite a few participants, including both tribes and SWC, said that salmon recovery and other fish and wildlife habitat restoration issues are very important

2. How do you currently use the property?

- a. Birding
- b. Photography – this is a very unique place in Washington State for photographing birds. It is accessible during all seasons, has multiple species, is near saltwater, and is really irreplaceable.
 - WDFW staff asked if those opportunities were dependent on freshwater wetlands close to saltwater areas, and the responding participant did not

know. It seemed that convenient access to natural areas was of primary importance to him. The participants present did not seem to be demanding freshwater habitat.

- c. Hunting – pheasants and ducks
- d. Kayaking
- e. River watching
- f. Dog training
- g. Research – groundwater research, bird counts, studying the interaction of nature and people

3. How might you want to use it in the future?

- a. Educational opportunities – very important
- b. Walking/hiking/hunting – via a boardwalk
- c. Would like to see duck blinds put in there
- d. Hosting community events, such as Earth Day, or bringing in volunteers to help with restoration activities
- e. Would like to see non-native vegetation removed
- f. Salmon rearing
- g. Would like to see improvements in safety (issues with hunting season and hikers feeling unsafe; other issues)
- h. One participant said that the Nisqually delta restoration should be used as a model, and an elevated boardwalk should be constructed on Leque Island. There was support for this idea from some of the participants.

4. If changes were made resulting in increased tidal influence – how might this impact your ability to use the property?

- a. Reduced access by land
- b. Increased opportunity to view shorebirds
- c. Parking issues/safety
- d. More crowded
- e. Increased salmon rearing

5. Do you have a future vision for Leque Island?

- a. The vision of the Stillaguamish Tribe and Tulalip Tribes is to restore Leque Island to what it was historically. Restoring salmon populations for harvesting is extremely important. Even with restoration of Leque Island to tidal influence, it is a small portion of the habitat that is needed to restore salmon populations to what they need to be. Full tidal restoration of Leque Island would amount to ~11% of the estuary restoration target in the Stillaguamish Chinook Recovery Plan.

- b. Whatever option is selected should be sustainable in the long-term and compatible with other efforts and projects.
- c. Would like to see it be “cleaner” – there is currently a lot of trash and impacts from stormwater runoff. Would like this to change.
- d. Would like to see removal of non-native invasive vegetation included in future plans.

Other

Several other questions and comments were raised, including:

- 3D modeling/hydrologic modeling being undertaken by DU – what is the current status? Response: DU and WDFW are coordinating with groups undertaking other projects in the vicinity to investigate whether or not several projects can be modeled together. Modeling work will be initiated when design alternatives are drafted.
- What is the impact (economically) if there is reduced access? Response: This is unknown at this time.
- There was some concern on the part of some participants that decisions to restore salmon habitat have already been made, and WDFW management has instructed staff to steer the committee in that direction, so this committee is not important and the decisions of this committee will not be heeded. WDFW staff stated that the Director’s office has told staff to go back to square one and fully consider all possible alternatives before choosing a preferred alternative.
- City of Stanwood staff explained a city proposal to construct open space and public access to West Pass immediately across from Leque Island, with hopes that the two sites will complement each other.
- Several participants said that kayak launching opportunities are important, that they formerly existed on Leque Island, and that future plans should include such opportunities.
- One participant said that protection of water supplies on Camano is very important.
- Several participants said that refraining from causing negative impacts to neighboring land is very important.
- Several participants said that providing hunting opportunities are important. Several others said that although they are not hunters they do support sportsmen who want to hunt.

Stakeholder Committee – Structure, Function and Path Forward

Hilary distributed a handout that included a brief overview of the purpose of the committee, the structure and the expectations of committee members. After some discussion, it was agreed that the stated purpose of the committee should be tweaked so that it does not imply that the committee's only focus is on addressing dike failures. Hilary and Loren will work together to redraft the statement.

Hilary explained that there will be up to 5 meetings for this project, including 2 public meetings and up to 3 stakeholder committee meetings. The next meeting will be a broader public meeting that will focus on the alternatives (these will be fleshed out further based on input from the Jan 8 meeting). Several committee members suggested ways to publicize the public meeting to increase attendance.

Wrap up and next steps

Hilary thanked committee members for attending and stated that the notes would be distributed via email. Also, the next meeting date will be announced via email.